

# CORRESPONDENCE

## Sir Josiah Stamp on Eugenics

### To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—Some question has been raised as to the sympathy that I have with the present activities of the Eugenics Society, arising from an interview with me published recently in the *Observer*. My questioner put his query in a form which at once threw me into advanced positive eugenics, and it was to that alone my doubt related. I simply said, what is after all a trite observation even amongst eugenicists, that our knowledge was not yet ready to bear the responsibility of definite selective breeding for particular human qualities. I think there is nothing in this inconsistent with my appreciation of the work of eugenicists in breeding away from human defects, and of preventive methods against the perpetuation of the elements of degeneration. I think there is a large measure of agreement upon what these elements are, and upon what we really mean by "defect" or "deficiency." In the whole of this field of negative eugenics I think much is being accomplished, and the future is full of promise. Success in this field will undoubtedly lead us tentatively into the positive field. But I think I should have been open to further question if I had answered my interrogator to the effect that there *does* exist any body of men who are at present "fit to be entrusted with the moulding of the future of the race."

J. C. STAMP.

Euston Station, London, N.W.1.

## On In-Relief for Paupers

### To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—In your last issue you refer to the misconceptions which arise from identifying individual opinions with those of the eugenic movement generally and give warning that "only *Notes of The Quarter* and occasional special articles can be interpreted as representing the views of responsible eugenicists." It is deplorable that in those same *Notes* you advocate a policy which, though of limited intention, is bound to excite excusable popular prejudice against broader and more valuable eugenic aims. I refer to your suggestion that public assistance committees should forthwith initiate a policy of refusing out-relief to chronic paupers who will not limit their families. A "chronic" pauper, of course, is merely a person who, not necessarily from censurable reasons, is permanently dependent on public support.

To seek to prevent children being born by the

ill-treatment of those already and unluckily so is to be callous and clumsy when we ought to be humane and scientific. It is no justification of a policy to show that it would have eugenic effects. The compulsory castration of tramps would unquestionably have eugenic effects. But like the starvation of paupers it is wrong, because it is cruel and unnecessary. Eugenic ideals can be realised without such indignities. Dickens revealed the old Poor Law in the figure of Bumble and made the public loathe it. It will be a catastrophe for eugenics, in a humane and democratic age, if it identifies itself with such discredited models.

It is unjustifiable to blame paupers for having children while so little has been done to show them better. The Anglican Church has only just timidly admitted that contraception may be legitimate—though many of its spokesmen still oppose it as deadly sin. Other religious bodies are even less advanced. The official mothers' clinics are now commencing to give contraceptive instruction in gynæcological cases (poverty, be it noted, is not a qualification). The medical profession is chiefly responsible for popular guidance in this matter. Yet it appears that lectures or classes on contraception are almost completely absent from the courses of the leading medical schools. The average practitioner is probably behind even the schools. (Cf. *Contraception*: M. Stopes, p. 367 *et seq.*) Is it fair or honest to punish uneducated paupers for not being more enlightened in knowledge and practice than cultured people who ought to be their leaders? Assuming everything were being done to instruct the poor in the duty and means of family restriction, time must be granted for ideas and habits to change. It is foolish to expect that simple people, ignorant of physiology, steeped in the tradition of involuntary parenthood, often enough sedulously inoculated with the dogma that all children are sent by God, will or can see all differently when a public assistance committee delivers its ultimatum.

The only indication of whether paupers *will* not limit their families must be whether they *do*, in fact, limit them. If pauper parents said they had tried but failed to avert conception, it would be impossible, morally, to punish them if their statement were true, and impossible evidentially to expose them if their statement were false. Medical science knows no infallible contraceptives. Every method tried hitherto is far from satisfactory. (Cf. *Birth Control on Trial*: L. S. Florence.) If the intelligent sometimes fail, how could one blame the ignorant if they did not always succeed?

An alternative and equally eugenic plan is to intensify research for more reliable and practicable methods of contraception, to make these when found, readily and universally available for married people and to educate learned as well as popular sentiment in favour of their legitimate use. If, when these aims were substantially accomplished, paupers continued to have too many children, the sensible remedy would be, not to starve them, but to provide free facilities for operative sterilization on one, at least, of the parents. If sterilization were tactfully explained and offered in such cases, I believe we could afford to dispense altogether with powers of compulsion.

Both here and elsewhere it is impolitic as well as unfair for eugenists to ask for compulsion while education and persuasion have not been tried to the utmost.

It is worthy of note that the proposed Sterilization Bill makes no attempt to legalise sterilization for economic reasons (e.g. pauperism). That may be wise. But in the face of such an omission, surely the *EUGENICS REVIEW*, least of all, is entitled to hold paupers deserving of punishment if they omit to remain, for all practical purposes, effectively sterilized.

H. BREWER.

31, Munden Road, Maldon, Essex.

Our correspondent has so misunderstood the passage in question and the general policy of the *Society*, that it is difficult to answer him. In a note exemplifying the number of eugenic measures which could be brought at once into force without need for legislation, we wrote, "... that most important of eugenic measures, the refusal of out-relief to chronic paupers who will not restrict their families, requires even less legal sanction than did the birth-control measure. It is fully within the competence of the Public Assistance Committees (nées Boards of Guardians) to render unproductive practically every person who applies to them for relief. They do not do so because they lack or attack the eugenic point of view. . . ."

While mainly an illustration of how much can already be done without recourse to Parliament, the passage simply suggested that undesirable parents who would or could not restrict their families, should only be given in-relief, instead of the out-relief they at present receive. The suggestion was neither cruel nor novel, for, until comparatively recently, institutional relief was the regular practice. We never even hinted, as Mr. Brewer seems to think, that they should be left to starve!—Indeed, that would not be legally possible, since the Public Assistance Committees are bound to relieve destitution, and have only the option of in- or out-relief.

Mr. Brewer's idea of "punishment" or "ill-treatment" was entirely lacking from our note, and is utterly foreign to the attitude of the *Society*, which, of course, never attaches "censure" to defective or grossly fertile persons. Our attitude towards them is precisely similar to that already taken by the State towards sufferers from,

or suspected carriers of, grave infectious disease. Such unfortunate persons are neither blamed nor 'punished,' but they are summarily imprisoned, without legal process or right of appeal, until they are no longer a danger to others.

Finally, considering the part played by the *Society* in furthering both sterilization and the provision of contraceptive facilities, it is scarcely fair to blame it for neglecting the humane and eugenic possibilities of those methods!—Ed.

## The World Population Conference

### To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—Permit me to correct a mis-statement made by Mr. Blacker in your last issue on page 239. The World Population Conference at Geneva in 1927 was organised from start to finish and the Report edited by Margaret Sanger. Sir Bernard Mallet, as chairman of the executive committee, and Mr. C. F. Chance as treasurer, contributed immensely to the success of the Conference.

EDITH HOW-MARTYN,

Secretary of the World Population Conference.  
Birth Control International Information Centre,  
Parliament Mansions, Westminster, S.W.1.

## Embryology and Evolution

### To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—Professor MacBride seems to have found it a little difficult to cite references which would justify the remarks of his to which I drew attention in your January number. He had made the unqualified assertion that "later researches" had shown certain theories of mine, which Mr. de Beer had adopted, "to be entirely mistaken." As my object in intervening was not to defend myself or my views, but simply to invite Professor MacBride to substantiate or withdraw a statement which seemed to me unwarrantable, I limit myself to the point that he has failed to substantiate it.

He gave two references only, one to a paper by Professor Ritter, the other to a paper by himself. Ritter's paper was published in No. 438 of the *Zoologischer Anzeiger*, XVII, 1894. Not merely does it not controvert any single statement or view of mine, but it actually preceded by several months the publication of my own original communication (No. 444 of the same Journal), and indeed called it forth as therein stated.

Thus the only reference left is Professor MacBride's own paper on the development of *Echinus* (*Phil. Trans.*, 1903, B. 195). Now the views of mine which Mr. de Beer had adopted were essentially two, namely (1) the homology of the neural folds of Vertebrate embryos with the circumoral band of Echinoderm larvae, and (2) the homology of the peripharyngeal band and endostyle of Protochordata with the adoral